

the *Improper* Bostonian

JUNE 7-20, 2017 • SUMMER DINING

A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Foraging With a Pop-Up Chef

SHUCK, YEAH!

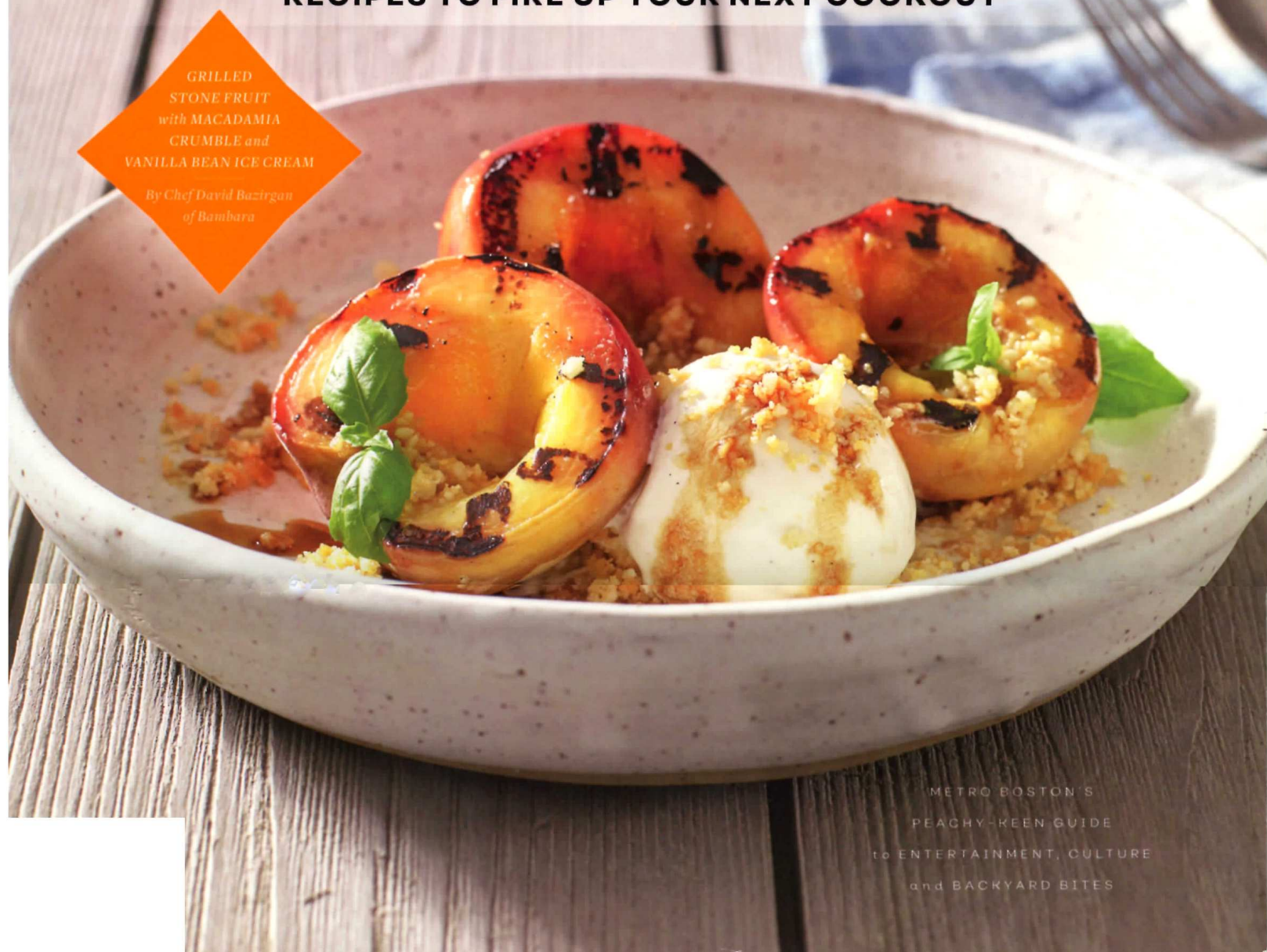
Dishing With the Eventide Oyster Co. Guys

GRILL THRILLS

RECIPES TO FIRE UP YOUR NEXT COOKOUT

GRILLED
STONE FRUIT
with MACADAMIA
CRUMBLE and
VANILLA BEAN ICE CREAM

By Chef David Bazirgan
of Bambara



METRO BOSTON'S
PEACHY-KEEN GUIDE
to ENTERTAINMENT, CULTURE
and BACKYARD BITES



Soroff On / Andrew Taylor and Mike Wiley

A RISING TIDE

THE AWARD-WINNING RESTAURATEURS DISH ON PORTLAND, THEIR FENWAY EXPANSION AND OYSTER SECRETS.



CHEFS/CO-OWNERS OF EVENTIDE OYSTER CO. ANDREW Taylor, 36, and Mike Wiley, 35, recently won the James Beard Award for Best Chef: Northeast for their wildly popular eatery in Portland, Maine, and they're set to open a Boston outpost in Fenway in August. The pair met as colleagues at Hugo's in Portland, which they jointly purchased in 2012. Their company, Big Tree Hospitality, also operates the Honey Paw, an Asian-inflected restaurant, as well as a commissary, Big Tree Foods, in Biddeford, Maine.

JONATHAN SOROFF: What made you two want to pair up?

MIKE: I had applied for a job at Hugo's when chef Rob Evans owned the place and Andrew was the chef de cuisine. Although I was wearing a ridiculous, Nepali-made yak sweater and I had something of an Isro at the time, nobody including Rob thought I would fit into the kitchen culture. But I came in for a working audition, and we got along pretty well.

ANDREW: After Mike came in and introduced himself, I asked Rob if he could envision him working there, and Rob said, "Oh, Lord, no." But after he did, it was obvious how good he was, and it's been a good collaboration ever since.

Has there been any friction as a result of the expansion?

ANDREW: No. Not really. We've been on pretty much the same page about moving forward and what we think is the right thing to do. And I think we've always envisioned, given the way that people use Eventide, that it would work well as sort of a counter-service model. So we've been shockingly in synch.

MIKE: And if chaos, craziness and being way too busy all the time is the order of the day, signing up for more of that really isn't that big of a deal.

Which of you has more involvement in menu development?

MIKE: It's hard to say because we have three different restaurants, and we sort of operate as creative directors to a certain extent. We've got some really strong kitchen managers who will put specials on, and maybe Andrew or I will weigh in on it, but we've got a really great team and we more operate as advisers. Every once in a while, I'll say, "I'm putting this dish on. It's gonna be about Spain. It's gonna be about cod, yadda, yadda, yadda." But we're really at the point where we have great chefs de cuisine and sous-chefs, and they're really driving the bus as much as anyone is.

ANDREW: Starting out, I was really into a down-home Northeast cooking sensibility, and you saw that, but I think Mike has a really fine touch for all the crudos and the finer dishes that put Eventide on the map from a culinary perspective.

Secret to picking out a good oyster?

ANDREW: Everyone always thinks that the oysters from where they're from are the best oysters in the world. And I think that's true to the extent that they're going to be the freshest, and that's obvi-

ously the biggest thing. We're pulling oysters largely from Maine, and they're never more than a couple days out of the water, so they're clean and briny from cold water.

Anything you look back on as mistakes or miscalculations in Portland that you're trying to avoid in Boston?

ANDREW: So many. Oh, yeah. We made a cacophony of errors. It's almost like we had no idea what we were doing, which is pretty close to the truth. We didn't anticipate the volume of business. It was our first restaurant that we'd opened. The kitchen wasn't

size of the kitchen is different. Some of the equipment we have is different. But what's important to us is that when people walk in who have come to Portland and eaten at Eventide and had a really awesome experience, we want them to have a feeling of recognition. Eventide Fenway might feel a little more metropolitan, a little sleeker, but the first thing that greets you when you walk in the door, just like in Portland, is going to be a really dramatic rock that's been hogged out, filled with ice and oysters. That alone, when people walk in and see that, with the Eventide blue, there will be that glimmer of recognition.

What does the James Beard Award mean to you?

ANDREW: It's just great recognition for our whole team. Mike and my names are on that award, but it's about so many other people, both past and present. So many people have played a huge role in our success. One of our managers wore both of the

Biggest mistake people make cooking lobster?

MIKE: Overcooking it.

One thing Portland has over Boston?

MIKE: The Maine Red Claws. [Laughs.]

ANDREW: I think the restaurants have better proximity to ingredients. There are closer relationships with suppliers. We work directly with so many fishermen and farmers. We go down to the wharves every day.

Something Boston has over Portland?

MIKE: Chinese food. Peach Farm, Hei La Moon, Gourmet Dumpling House, Quic Pic BBQ. They're all so good. I'm literally driving past Chinatown right now.

ANDREW: And you're not stopping?

Favorite thing on your menu?

MIKE: At Eventide? I really like the fried oyster bun. It's just the perfect little snack food bite. It's got everything going on. It just hits on all cylinders for me.

ANDREW: The fish sandwich is my go-to.

Favorite thing to drink with oysters?

ANDREW: A good crisp beer. A Reissdorf Kölsch.

Drink of choice?

MIKE: I really love bourbon, and our beverage director and soon-to-be general manager makes a drink called the Brown Frown. It's kind of like an extra-bitter Manhattan. It's great.

OK, so which one of you deserves top billing?

MIKE: Andrew.

ANDREW: Mike. ♦

"If chaos, craziness and being way too busy all the time is the order of the day, signing up for more of that really isn't that big of a deal."

planned well. The floors buckled. You name it, it happened to us. But we learned a lot, really quickly, and we learned how to be really good and really efficient, and I'd like to think we smartened up. But it's been a pretty crazy five years of learning through trial and error.

Is the layout in Boston going to be very different?

MIKE: Yes. They're just differently shaped spaces. The

awards around all night long and took most of the credit, which was actually pretty funny.

Celebrity you'd most like to see walk through your door?

MIKE: David Byrne from the Talking Heads came into Eventide, and I got to shake his hand, which was huge for me. But I'd say if there was anyone else, it would be Bill Murray.

For more, go to improper.com.